

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 01638 301748Z

14

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 SAJ-01 PM-04 H-02 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5465

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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DIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: DECONTROL AFTER ONE YEAR

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, IT

SUBJECT: AN ASSESSMENT OF UNIONIZATION ATTEMPTS IN THE ITALIAN
ARMED FORCES

REF: ROME 11431 DTG 081140Z AUG 75 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. ATTEMPTS TO PROMOTE UNIONIZATION IN THE ARMED FORCES
HAVE UNTIL RECENTLY BEEN SPONSORED EXCLUSIVELY BY THE EXTREME
LEFT WING GROUP LOTTA CONTINUA. PCI AND PSI OPPOSITION MAY BE
CHANGING. THE ORGANIZED LABOR MOVEMENT CONTINUES TO IGNORE
UNIONIZATION OF THE MILITARY WHILE SPONSORING A SIMILAR EFFORT
AMONG THE POLICE FORCES. END SUMMARY.

2. UNTIL RECENTLY, UNIONIZATION HAS BEEN PROMOTED IN THE ITALIAN
ARMED FORCES ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY BY THE EXTREME LEFT WING EXTRA-
PARLIAMENTARY GROUP LOTTA CONTINUA. LEADERS OF THE "MOVIMENTO
DEI SOLDATI DEMOCRATICI" (MSD), WHICH IS ATTEMPTING TO ORGANIZE

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PAGE 02 ROME 01638 301748Z

RANK AND FILE SOLDIERS AND A SIMILAR GROUP CALLED "COORDINAMENTO

DEMOCRATICO SOTTUFFICIALI" (CDS), WHICH IS ACTIVE AMONG NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS, HAVE COMPLAINED BITTERLY ABOUT THE ABSENCE OF SUPPORT FROM THE PCI AND THE PSI. THE THREE LARGE ITALIAN LABOR CONFEDERATIONS, CGIL, CISL AND UIL HAVE ALSO LARGELY IGNORED LOTTA CONTINUA'S ATTEMPTS TO PROMOTE UNIONIZATION IN THE ARMED FORCES WHILE SUPPORTING A SIMILAR EFFORT TO LEGALIZE AND REGULARIZE LABOR REPRESENTATION IN THE COUNTRY'S POLICE FORCES.

3. IN AN INTERVIEW IN THE ITALIAN WEEKLY IL MONDO, AN UNIDENTIFIED SPOKESMAN FOR THE MSD SAID "THE PCI HAS SYSTEMATICALLY BOYCOTTED THE INITIATIVES OF THE SOLDIERS MOVEMENT. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT AT A TIME WHEN THE COMMUNISTS HOPE TO ENTER THE GOVERNMENT, THEY DO NOT FIND IT CONVENIENT FOR CERTAIN SECTORS OF THE ARMED FORCES TO ACQUIRE AUTONOMY". A CDS SPOKESMAN COMPLAINED IN THE SAME INTERVIEW THAT THE PCI HAS OPPOSED UNIONIZATION OF THE ARMED FORCES FOR YEARS.

4. THE ATTITUDE OF THE PCI MAY BE CHANGING, HOWEVER. FOLLOWING THE ARREST OF ELEVEN SOLDIERS ON DECEMBER 4 FOR PARTICIPATING IN A MEETING IN A THEATER IN NOVARA WHICH WAS PART OF A NATION-WIDE DEMONSTRATION, THE PCI CALLED FOR THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF THE DETAINED SOLDIERS. WITH A VIEW TOWARDS FUTURE ELECTIONS, THE PSI IS ALSO REPORTED TO BE EXTENDING A HAND TO THE MSD AND CDS.

5. BOTH MOVEMENTSHAVE BEGUN TO COORDINATE THEIR MUTUAL EFFORTS TO GAIN LEGITIMACY FOR SOME FORM OF RPERESENTATION IN THE ARMED FORCES. IN ADDITION TO THIS BASIC GOAL THEY SEEK MODERNIZATION OF MILITARY REGULATIONS, PAY INCREASES AND IMPROVEMENTS IN CERTAIN CONDITIONS OF SERVICE SUCH AS BETTER MEALS AND HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE.

6. BOTH MSD AND CDS ARE STRONGEST IN THE NORTH WHERE THE LEFT-WING EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY MOVEMENTS ORIGINATED. ALTHOUGH IT IS ESTIMATED THAT ONLY 2,000 OUT OF 460,000 IN THE ARMED FORCES ARE ACTIVE IN THE MSD AND CDS, THEIR MOBILIZING CAPACITY APPEARS TO BE GROWING.

7. COMMENT-TO THE EXTENT THE GRIEVANCES OF ITALIAN SOLDIERS AND NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ARE POPULARLY ACCEPTED AS BEING LEGITIMATE, LOTTA CONTINUA'S SUPPORT FOR THE MSD AND CDS HELPS EXPAND ITS BASES OF INFLUENCE IN OTHERWISE CRITICIZING THE CURRENT ITALIAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 ROME 01638 301748Z

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